

CITY OF AKUTAN

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December 22, 2005

Mr. Jeff Ottesen, Director
Division of Statewide Planning
& Program Development
3132 Channel Drive, Suite 200
Juneau, AK 99801-7898

Re: Draft 2006 - 2008 STIP Comments

Dear Mr. Ottesen:

I am writing to provide comments from the City of Akutan on the Draft 2006 - 2008 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). First, I want to express our appreciation to the department for the assistance we continue to receive for important road and aviation projects affecting Akutan. In particular, I want to thank Gordon Keith, Central Region Regional Director, and his staff for their strong support and help to make these projects a reality.

I understand the department is trying to decide how to re-allocate a portion of federal-aid highway funding earmarked for two major bridge projects in Alaska. The Governor's recently released capital budget proposes spending some of these funds for the bridges. The City of Akutan wishes to go on record supporting the re-allocation of the remaining portion of these funds to other important projects, including those contained in the Community Transportation Program (CTP). The state has a growing backlog of unmet CTP needs that can be addressed by taking advantage of this opportunity.

Akutan Access Road

This project constructs a 2-mile road from the community to the head of Akutan Bay. This road will provide access to the new boat harbor scheduled for construction in 2007 - 2008. This is a project that was identified as a priority some time ago and has been carried in the STIP for several years. The Draft 2006 - 2008 STIP includes some construction funding for 2007 from a high-priority earmark. The preferred plan is to construct the project using a combination of state general funds and other local sources.

It is unknown whether we will be successful in this strategy. Accordingly, we need a fallback position to ensure we can construct this needed project. The City of Akutan requests needed federal-aid highway funding be added to the 2006 - 2008 STIP to provide for project development and construction. Specific amounts needed by phase should be determined by working with Central Region staff. We estimate there is a need in 2007 for project development funding of around \$3 million, followed by construction funding starting in 2008. Depending on the selected alternative, construction as a federal-aid project will require greater than \$10 million.

Akutan Airport Marine Access Link

Construction of a land-based airport on Akun Island for Akutan is the community's highest priority project. The department's Aviation Project Evaluation Board (APEB) scored the project quite highly at its December meeting. One of the challenges in this project is to attract funding from several sources, including the federal-aid highway program. Part of the project requires use of a marine vessel to access the airport location from the community. The total cost of the marine access link portion of the project is approximately \$15 million, which includes vessel construction and associated shoreside facilities.

The Draft 2006 -2008 STIP includes design funding in 2006 for the "Akutan Ferry Planning and Design" project, with the fund source identified as Ferryboat Discretionary Funds (FBD). Further research with department personnel suggests that it is unlikely we can attract FBD funds for this need. **Since the Airport Project is now a high priority, the City of Akutan requests the addition of some of the unallocated bridges earmark funding to support the Akutan Airport Marine Access Link. Specifically, we suggest a total of \$5 million be included in the 2006 - 2008 STIP.** Specific amounts by phase and year can be determined by working with staff at Central Region.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Please contact Tammy Stromberg, City Administrator, at #907-274-7565, if there are questions or additional information needed.

Sincerely,



Joe Bereskin
Mayor

cc. The Honorable Lyman Hoffman, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Carl Moses, Alaska State House
Mr. Gordon Keith, DOT/PF Regional Director, Central Region